

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 PRETOR 04805 171734Z
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NODIS

FROM LOW

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, PINT, PGOV, RH
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: CONVERSATION WITH BRAND FOURIE

1. GRAHAM AND LOW TOGETHER WITH AMBASSADORS EDMONDSON AND SCOTT DISCUSSED RHODESIA WITH BRAND FOURIE FOR ABOUT AN HOUR WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 16. LITTLE NEW GROUND WAS COVERED BUT FOURIE SHOWED A MUCH MORE REALISTIC -- AND DISCOURAGED -- ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SITUATION THAN HE HAD IN PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS WITH THE TWO OF US.

2. GRAHAM STARTED OFF BY REVIEWING THE SITUATION, STRESSING THE DETERIORATING ECONOMIC, SECURITY, AND POLITICAL POSITION OF THE INTERNAL REGIME, ALONG LINES SIMILAR TO THOSE CONTAINED IN MY GENERAL ROUND-UP (PRETORIA 4792).

3. FOURIE ASKED ABOUT PROSPECT OF A MEETING, AND WE OUTLINED THE KIND OF ALL-PARTIES MEETING WE HAD IN MIND AND OUR HOPES TO BE ABLE TO SCHEDULE IT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. GRAHAM SPOKE OF THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACHED TO SMITH'S RECOGNITION THAT WHEN A MEETING OCCURS, HE BE WILLING TO MOVE SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THE MARCH 3RD AGREEMENT, AND WE OUTLINED TO FOURIE THE MOST IMPORTANT POINTS THAT WE THOUGHT SMITH WOULD HAVE TO MAKE ACCOMMODATIONS ON:

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MAKING AN IRREVERSIBLE AGREEMENT BY ABANDONING THE 1969 CONSTITUTION, INCLUDING THE PARLIAMENT; ACCEPTING AN INTEGRATION OF THE ARMED FORCES, SOMETHING ON THE ORDER OF CARVER'S PROPOSAL; AND MAKING MODIFICATIONS IN THEIR PROPOSAL FOR AN INDEPENDENCE CONSTITUTION, PARTICULARLY IN THE 28 PERCENT OF THE PARLIAMENT RESERVED FOR WHITE VOTERS. THE OTHER PROBLEM WOULD RELATE TO COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL WHERE WE

THOUGHT SOMETHING LIKE A PARITY ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE NECESSARY. FOURIE ASKED ABOUT THE MECHANISM TO GUARD AGAINST DEADLOCKS, AND HE SUGGESTED THAT WE GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO A SYSTEM OF ROTATING CHAIRMEN. WE RESPONDED THAT WE THOUGHT THIS MIGHT BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE SALISBURY GROUP, BUT WE DOUBTED THAT THE PF WOULD BUY IT. WE BROUGHT UP THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION OF RESIDENT COMMISSIONER, EXPLAINING THAT WE WOULD ACCEPT VIRTUALLY ANYONE WHOM THE PARTIES WOULD AGREE UPON, BUT STRESSING THAT WE THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO RETAIN THE POSITION ITSELF AS THE IMPARTIAL ELEMENT CONTROLLING SECURITY, LAW AND ORDER, AND DEFENSE.

4. GRAHAM SAID HE HOPED THAT IF THE SOUTH AFRICANS FELT THEY HAD ANY INFLUENCE WITH MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE, THAT THEY WOULD URGE THEM TO ATTEND A CONFERENCE. I SAID THAT I THOUGHT THAT THEIR MAJOR CONTRIBUTION COULD COME AFTER A CONFERENCE HAD BEEN SCHEDULED IN INFLUENCING SMITH TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE CHANGES OF THE KIND WE HAD OUTLINED WOULD BE REQUIRED. FOURIE SAID THAT THEY HAD CONFINED THEMSELVES TO URGING THE PARTIES TO TALK TO NKOMO AND TRY TO INFLUENCE HIM TO RETURN. WHEN I ASKED, HE SAID THEY HAD NOT STRESSED AN ALL-PARTIES MEETING, IN PART BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT CERTAIN IT COULD SUCCEED. THEY CONTINUED TO TAKE A POSITION OF STRICT NEUTRALITY AMONG THE VARIOUS AFRICAN NATIONALIST LEADERS.

5. FOURIE ASKED ABOUT THE NKOMO-SMITH MEETING, WHICH HE SAID THEN AND AS WE WERE LEAVING THEY HAD HEARD ABOUT BUT WERE TAKING A SECRET

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STRICTLY HANDS-OFF POSITION TOWARDS. THEY HAD BEEN BURNED BEFORE AND WOULD NOT GET INVOLVED IN THIS KIND OF THING AGAIN. UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM OWEN, WE SAID WE HAD HEARD REPORTS OF IT BUT WERE IN NO WAY INVOLVED EITHER. IT WAS OUR IMPRESSION THAT IT HAD NOT BEEN CONCLUSIVE.

6. COMMENT: FOURIE ASKED A NUMBER OF TIMES WHETHER WE THOUGHT THERE WAS ANY CHANCE OF SETTLEMENT. HE IS OBVIOUSLY VERY PESSIMISTIC OVER THE PROSPECTS AND REFLECTS SOUTH AFRICAN POSITION OF WANTING TO KEEP AN ARM'S LENGTH DISTANCE. HE EVEN SAID AT ONE POINT THAT IT WAS PROBABLY JUST AS WELL THEY HAD NO REPRESENTATION IN SALISBURY DURING THIS PERIOD FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF THEIR CHIEF OF MISSION THERE. FOURIE ACKNOWLEDGED IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT AT THE SAME TIME THE RHODESIAN REPRESENTATIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA, HAROLD HAWKINS, HAD BEEN IN THE HOSPITAL. THE SAG CLEARLY WANTS TO PRESERVE A STRICTLY NEUTRAL POSITION AMONG THE RIVAL AFRICANS, RECOGNIZING THAT IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHO WILL COME OUT AHEAD, EVEN IF AN ELECTION WAS DEFINITELY SCHEDULED. FOURIE WAS ALSO IMPRESSED BY SMITH'S ATTITUDE OF HOSTILITY TOWARDS ANY SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT. GRAHAM POINTED OUT THAT THEY HAS A MAJOR INVESTMENT IN THE CONTINUING LOANS TO THE RHODESIANS AND A DIRECT INTEREST IN THE

DANGER OF A SECURITY CRISIS SPILL OVER. FOURIE ACKNOWLEDGED BOTH, ADDING THAT THE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS IN SALISBURY FROM SOUTH AFRICANS WHO WISHED TO RETURN WAS MOUNTING IN AN ALARMING WAY. THEY WERE NOW GETTING ABOUT 90 A DAY. EDMONDSON

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